



The Valley Scribe



Newsletter of the San Fernando Valley

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October 2011



**She
Writes
the
Marble**

Deborah Edler Brown

When asked to explain the title of her upcoming October presentation, Deborah Edler Brown responded,

"(My title) comes from a story about Michelangelo: When asked how he could possibly have created a statue as magnificent as the *David* from a block of marble, answered, 'I simply chip away everything that's not David.' Of course, we writers don't start with a block of marble; we have to 'write' the marble first. I'll speak about inspiration, persistence, and what it means to write the marble."

Deborah Edler Brown is an award-winning poet, performer, journalist and author. Her work has appeared in various anthologies: *Poetry Slam*; *So Luminous the Wild Flowers Blue Arc West*; *Sisters Singing: Blessings, Prayers, Art, Songs, Poetry, and Sacred Stories by Women*.

Deborah was the 2005 recipient of *Kaliope's Sue Saniel Elkind Poetry Prize* and has published two chapbooks: *Red Long Hot Peppers* and *Haiku Volcano*.

She was the 1997 National Head-to-Head Haiku Champion and a member of the 1998 Los Angeles National Slam Team. Her journalism credits include *Time Magazine*, *Variety*, and *The Hollywood Reporter*. She is the co-author of *Grandparents as Parents: A Survival Guide to Raising a Second Family* (Guilford Press, 1995).

Deborah lives in West Los Angeles, where she teaches private writing.

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All titles are hyperlinked to the listed page. Click and go, in other words.

west valley whimsicals

A Schwartz / Highcove Production

Why Not Me?

Most writers crave attention from somebody out there in readership land and dream of publication. Frustratingly, they see other writers of equal skill published



Hey, Ralph!
I'm gonna be published! My book's called: *How To Live With a Louse*.



One of these days, Alice ...
to the moon!

again and again. Why? Published authors are not dreamers. They energetically work the system to get their words published.

What's the "system?" Good question. Volumes have been written

(Continued on page 3)

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President's Message

WHERE TO FIND YOUR INSPIRATION



The dictionary defines *inspiration* as "the act or power of moving the intellect or emotions." I define *inspiration* as the spark that ignites your creative engine. Emotion-fueled pieces are often easy to write, but the words must be captured while your engine is revved up.

A simple newspaper item might activate those pistons. For example: I once felt a strong reaction to a Mother's Day jewelry advertisement featuring a curvaceous, scantily-dressed woman. The ad suggested that this woman represented Motherhood. Incensed, I dashed off a 900-word article and sold it to the Automobile Club's *Westways Magazine*. I wrote while my "engine" was in ready-to-go.

Look to your friends for inspiration. One of my acquaintances had the unusual hobby of collecting antique jewelry made from human hair. The arcane craft of turning hair into brooches, rings and ornamental wreaths flourished from the 1600s until the early 20th century. I once viewed my friend's interesting collection and suddenly realized that this display was an ideal subject to profile in an article. I queried the *Los Angeles Times* who accepted my proposal. Voila! I reaped a published article about my friend's antique hair collection.

The subconscious is another important source of inspiration. I once had a dream about damaged extra-terrestrials who needed to heal here on Earth before they returned to their own planet. My vivid nocturnal images became a short science fiction story that found its way into an anthology.

Eavesdropping is another delightful source of inspiring the creative process. One day while waiting for my manicurist appointment, pretending to read a magazine, I heard bits of conversation that made my ears perk up. The overheard exchange inspired a titillating piece with the undertones of double entendre.

So, while you await that completed novel, memoir or self-help book to attain publication, work on smaller pieces that may be published in a magazine or on the Internet.

Come to our next meeting. You'll hear more on the subject of *inspiration* from our guest speaker who'll help us shift our creative gears into *Drive!*

- Yolanda Fintor

We Have A Winner

The Senior Poets Laureate Contest

recently announced the 2011 winners. Wanda Sue Parrott, member of Central Coast Writers branch of CWC, hosts this annual contest.

Our own SFV member, Ray Malus, won the Scribe's **Scroll Award** for his poem: **"Trust."**



All winners of this contest will appear in October in the **GOLDEN WORDS Online Anthology** at www.amykitchnerfdn.org



Nancy Ellen Dodd's 3-Act Structure Chart

Our new year of CWC got off to a superb start with Nancy Ellen Dodd's thought-provoking presenta-

tion. She first listed the basic elements of a good fictional story: internal and external conflict; a powerful climax and a satisfying denouement. To demonstrate a fiction novel's "story map," Dodd explained her triangular 3-Act Structure Chart.

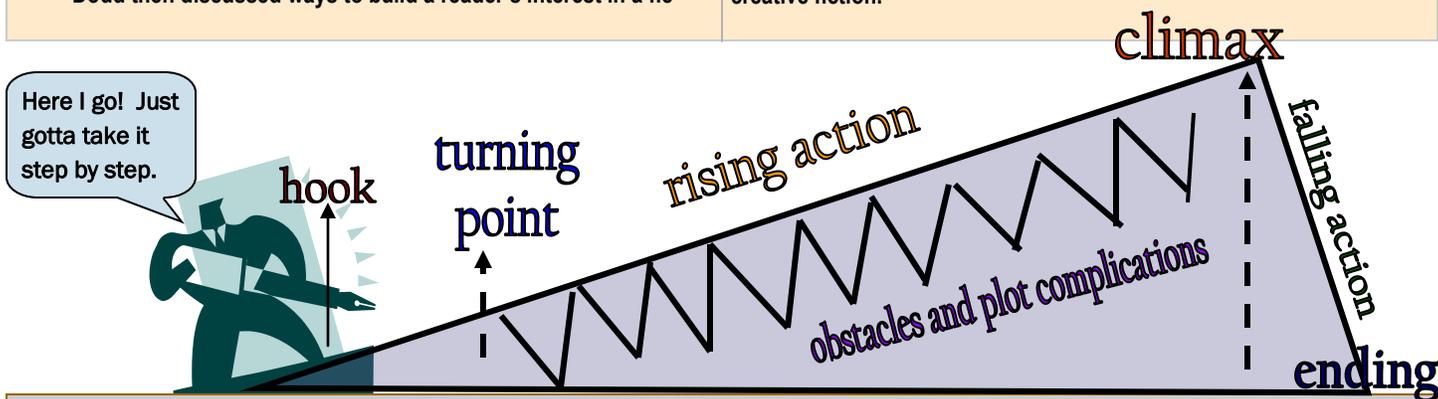
She emphasized that a writer must initially feel true interest in her story. "If the writer doesn't care, why should a reader care?" she asked. "A writer gives utterance to what people feel or think. She satisfies that need."

Dodd then discussed ways to build a reader's interest in a fic-

tional story. First, there must be a hook or a catalyst for the ensuing action, a reason for the ensuing adventure. Next, the plot must have complications which build tension and strengthen the climax. After the characters' problems are confronted and resolved, denouement finishes the adventure.

The author must determine, Dodd emphasized, if the story clearly asked her intended question and if the question had been answered. After the story is completed, a writer should ask herself: Did I keep my focus? Were my characters real? Did the action and events heighten interest and tension? Did the climax contain the core of my plot? Was my ending satisfactory?

For additional information on Nancy Ellen Dodd's composition techniques see *The Writer's Compass – from story map to finished draft in 7 stages*, a helpful guide for writers along the story map of creative fiction.



(Continued from page 1)

Ralphie boy!

I'm gonna write for Plumber's Weekly! Can you believe it??



on the ways to get published. But if one Googles [How To Get Published](#), a few basic steps turn up repeatedly.

First, the writer must decide how to be published: hard copy, on line, in a family history, a blog, an ezine? Each Googled choice will engender another detailed subset of suggestions. Therefore,

an author must determine and research his/her personal choices, query friends and other sources, and then—most importantly—be ready and willing to rewrite for the chosen market. For example, a juvenile novel has markedly different needs than an adult novel.

It's not easy being published, but a determined author will persevere. He'll submit and submit until someone, somewhere, reads the submission and decides to publish it.

Be aware that upon acceptance another round of rewrites and submissions usually begin. Publication is not for sissies. Persistence makes the dream of finding an editor and attaining public notice, a reality.

Of course, there's always self-publication—a rapidly growing industry of 2011. But self-publication is another subject for another issue—perhaps in 2012!

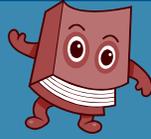
Op-ed—[Kathy Highcove](#)
Caricatures—[Max Schwartz](#)

Ed Norton is gonna be a published writer!? Someone oughta snip his typewriter ribbon!



To Market

by Ken Watts



Apex Science Fiction and Horror Digest is a publisher of dark sci-fi with horror elements. Their readers enjoy speculative fiction with dark themes.

Needs: Dark science fiction. Not interested in 'monster' fiction. Re-

ceives 200-250 mss/month. Accepts 2 mss/issue; 24 mss/year. Manuscripts published 3 months after acceptance. Publishes 10 new writers/year. Length: 200 words (min) – 7,500 words (max). Average length: 4,000 words. Publishes short shorts. Average length of short shorts: 500 words. Often comments on/critiques rejected manuscripts. Payment/Terms: Writers receive \$0.05/word. Pays on publication. Acquires first North American web rights. Non-exclusive print anthology rights. Publication is copyrighted. **Contact Details:** Send complete mss with cover letter. Include estimated word count, brief bio. Responds to queries and mss in 3-4 weeks. E-mail submissions only. **Guidelines available on website, or via e-mail.** Address: Apex Publication, P. O. Box 24323, Lexington, KY 40524. Phone: (859) 312-3974. **Contact:** Jason Sizemore, editor-in-chief.

E-mail: jason@apexdigest.com

Website: www.apexdigest.com

Writecorner Press \$500 Poetry Award is offered annually for unpublished poetry. Poetry may be in any style and on any subject. Only unpublished poems are eligible. Poem length: 40 lines (max). No limit on number of poems entered by any poet. The winning poem is published, as are the editors' choice poems. Copyright returns to the authors. **Guidelines for SASE or online.** **Prizes:** \$500 First prize; \$100 Editor's Choices; pub. on www.writecorner.com Costs: \$5/poem, \$3 each additional poem. Deadline: Submit between Oct. 1 – Mar. 31 annually. Address: Writecorner Press, P. O. Box 140310, Gainesville, FL 32614. Phone: (352) 338-7778.

Contact: Mary Sue Koeppel, Robert B. Gentry, coed.

Website: www.writecorner.com

Fellowships For Creative Writers enable recipients to set aside time for writing, research, travel, and

general career advancement. This program operates on a 2-year cycle, with prose (fiction and creative nonfiction) in one year, and poetry the next. **Guidelines** available online. **Prize:** \$25,000 grants. **Needs:** fiction, nonfiction, poetry. Deadline: March 1. Address: National Endowments for the Arts, 1100 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, Washington DC 20506. Phone: (202) 682-5400. **Website:** www.arts.gov.

Glimmer Train's Short-Story Award for New Writers is offered quarterly for any writer whose fiction hasn't appeared in a nationally-distributed pub with a circulation over 5,000. **Needs:** Fiction, short stories. Stories must be previously unpublished. Entry fee: \$15/story. Contest open in Feb, May, Aug, and Nov. Online submissions www.glimmertrain.org Word count: 12,000 words or less. **Prizes:** 1st place-\$1,200, publication in *Glimmer Train Stories*, and 20 copies of that issue. 2nd/3rd place winners receive \$500/\$300 respectively, and possible publication in *Glimmer Train Stories*. Winners notified and announced two months after contests' close. **Contact:** Linda Swanson-Davies. Address: Glimmer Train Press, Inc., 1211 NW Glisan St., Suite 207, Portland, OR 97209. Phone: (503) 221-0836. Fax: (503) 221-0837. **E-mail:** eds@glimmertrain.org

Website: www.glimmertrain.org

Gival Press Poetry Award given annually for previously unpublished poetry collection as a complete ms, which may include previously published poems. Previously published poems must be acknowledged and poets must hold rights. The competition seeks to award well-written original poetry in English on any topic, any style. **Guidelines:** SASE, e-mail, or online. **Submit** poems without any I.D. (except for titles) and with a separate cover page with: name, address (street, city, state, and zip), phone number, e-mail address (if available), short bio, and a list of the poems by title. Checks drawn on American banks are made out to Gival Press, LLC. Deadline: Dec. 15 (postmarked). **Prizes:** \$1,000, publication, and 20 author's copies. **Contact:** Robert L. Giron, editor. Address: Gival Press, LLC, P. O. Box 3812, Arlington, VA 22203. Phone: (703) 351-0079.

E-mail: givalpress@yahoo.com

Website: www.givalpress.com

Exploring the English Language



The English language has some wonderfully anthropomorphic collective nouns for the various groups of animals. We are all familiar with a herd of cows, a flock of chickens, a school of fish and a gaggle of geese. However, less widely known is a pride of lions, a murder of crows (as well as their cousins the rooks and ravens), an exaltation of doves and, presumably because they look so wise, a parliament of owls. Now consider a group of baboons.

They are the loudest, most dangerous, most obnoxious, most viciously aggressive and least intelligent of all primates. And what is the proper collective noun for a group of baboons? Believe it or not ... a **congress!** I guess that pretty much explains the things that come out of Washington!

- Ken Wilkins

Open Mike

Psst, Bill, your five minutes are up. Take a seat, dude! Don't make me get out the hook.



How It's Done

Open mike guide for our members:

- * Six readers who sign up will each have **5 minutes** to read.
- * A timer bell will be used to give a **one-minute warning** so no one is cut off in mid-sentence.
- * Readers are asked to sign up **every other month** rather than on two consecutive months.
- * Read only your own work.
- * Guests may read if six places are not filled.

More Gigs for Steph

Last month, Steph Sharf told us about writing satirical commentary for a website called **dirt.com**. For pay. Neato. In the past month she's kept up a web search for another website who hires writers online. And eureka! She's found **simply-showbiz.com** and more. Here's the latest from Steph:



*I just got hired off of a craigslist ad for copywriters...I'll be doing freelance copywriting and getting paid per article for a company that provides content for corporate sites. For example, if you go on a bank/financial institution website, there might be an info section where there are how-to articles on credit, budgeting, etc. My trial article assignment was on **Safeguarding Your Credit**.*

*Now they've sent me a package of **ten** article assignments ... so you see, this particular Steph is not only saucy, she's versatile (or nuts to take on so much). **Dirt.com** also told me they want to figure out a way to feature me more prominently on the site. My bio and pic are now up on two sites: **Dirt.com**: <http://www.dirt.com/meet-contributors/> and **simply-showbiz.com**: <http://simply-showbiz.com/blog/>*

*All this work is off craigslist.org listings. I recommend that members pay attention to the listings under Writing and Editing and Writing/gigs. And my other tip is to pay close attention to what the editors want—the writing guidelines, etc. All of these sites had very specific instructions for the writing sample and in the case of **dirt.com** once I got accepted, a long list of requirements for articles (for example, you probably have to do a word count and you may have to provide the URLs for your sources).*

Thanks, everyone; your encouragement has meant a lot! And CWC-SFV members, your club is now famous too! Scroll down and click on the link with my bio and pic.

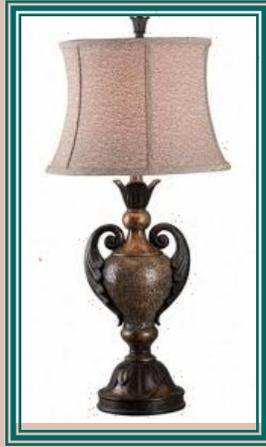
<http://simply-showbiz.com/blog/about-us>

Good luck, Steph. Happy writing.

-KH

THE SAMOVAR

For many months I have been searching for an antique samovar, a Russian tea urn, because it reminded me of my childhood growing up with one such samovar. I have spent many hours going to stores in the West San Fernando Valley as well as in central Los Angeles searching for a samovar. None of my searches were productive. I was told: "Sorry, I just sold the last one," or "They do not import them anymore and I will not have them again," or "We only have electric modern ones." I also engaged friends to help me find a samovar. The more I was turned away, the challenge became greater to find a samovar and to "conquer my obsession" to own one.



I also searched on the Internet for the item. There was quite a selection being offered on e-Bay with prices ranging from the low tens to thousands of dollars. I attempted to participate in a few bids only to lose the bidding. But with one bid a message came from e-Bay that the bid was re-instated. A three-day bidding period was posted. I re-submitted the bid and checked the proposal. There was one other bid other than mine.

On the final day of the offer I needed to be away from the computer and take care of some errands. When I was finished with them and I was driving on my way home, my mind directed me to drive over to the street in my neighborhood that is famous for its antique shops. (I never visited any of these antique stores) On impulse I parked the car behind the first antique store that I saw, and walked into the shop. A friendly attendant answered my question "Sorry, I sold the one samovar last week, but go around the corner to the second store from the corner. I know the owner has two samovars."

The mid-day July heat was at its height and I walked fast to the second store telling myself: "Be ready for another turn-down."

The owner was busy with another customer looking at some jewelry when I walked in, but he turned to me with a friendly smile and asked, "What are you looking for, Ma'am?" I answered, "An antique samovar."

He said, "Come, I will show you the two that I have, and by the way how did you know to come here?" I answered, "The nice man around the corner shop directed me to come to you." He said, "Yes, we refer each other. Thank you for coming." He then proceeded to show me the two samovars.

The first one was made of solid brass, had no stamp of authenticity but was old and handmade, and was made into a functioning lamp. It was in perfect condition! The second samovar was very old. It was made of silver and had a stamp of authenticity. Its shape or design was narrow and long, and was missing a part. I immediately knew that I found what I was looking for. It was the samovar turned into a lamp, and the price was right!

The owner and the jewelry buyer were both happy to see that I found my "treasure." The owner got out some special oil and cloth and polished the samovar for me to take home.

As I walked back to the car, I saw the friendly attendant standing on the sidewalk. I thanked him again for his help. He smiled and said, "You are welcome!"

The samovar is now proudly displayed in our home, and it lights the night with its beautiful handmade hand-craft design.

That same night, being the final bidding time for the e-Bay lottery I checked the web sight to see the final results. I was outbid by such a large margin that had I chosen to stay with the e-Bay bid I would have lost another opportunity to get a samovar.

What I own is an old Russian style, handmade samovar, made of solid brass with beautiful wooden knobs and handles. Even the lampshade is the original one.

To this day I wonder what force or reason directed me to drive to the antique row stores, but I am sure glad that I did!

- MARGANIT LISH



Who's To Blame?



- Sam Glenn

Do I blame it on those damn DVD courses? Those Science Courses from The Teaching Company. Or maybe it was Roberto talking. Roberto who plays piano with my jazz trio. Roberto talking to the bass player about some kind of metaphysical stuff. I don't know. Could have been my recent trip to Griffith Observatory. The new exhibit downstairs next to the Leonard Nimoy Theatre. Or just maybe it was the waiter at *Two Guys from Italy*.

Anyway, that should teach me. Always wanting to learn new things. Things I didn't study in college. Subjects I never felt I had time to delve into. For this! For this quest for knowledge, things will never be the same. Do I really need to know about Quantum Mechanics, the Physics of the Microscopic World or The Neurological Origin of Individuality, Biology and Human Behavior?

No, I think the waiter started it. Somehow the topic of ants came up and he said ants are intelligent. What a bunch of crock, I thought. He's a waiter for chris' sake. But he went on to explain how ants figure out the best pathway to food and communicate with each other. Well wouldn't you know that night, at midnight I'm on my computer Googling ants and their brains.

I've got some tiny ants at my house. I don't mean regular size black ants. These are those lit-

tle guys you can hardly see. Well, shit, how big is their brain? That means they have to have nerve cells and signals from those bitty antennas and eyes. Jesus, that's small.

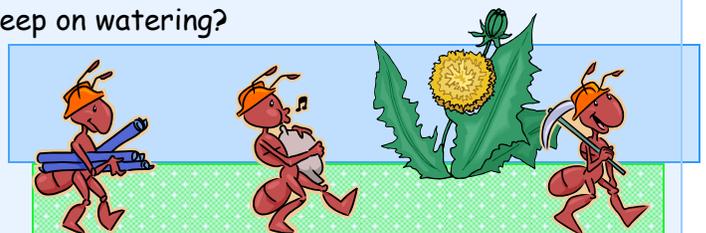
As if that's not enough to drive me nuts, Roberto was talking about ants invading his apartment. 'Bout how he got on some spiritual level with them. Made an agreement he would put some food outside for them if they would be willing to stay outside. And it worked, so he said. Holy Crap! And I don't think he's using drugs. I've heard of people talking to their plants, but ants ?!

It's amazing how many teeny weeny bitsy insects I see. But even more disturbing is the exhibit at Griffith Observatory. The planets in our solar system. The fragile blue Earth and red Mars next to mighty Jupiter and gigantic Saturn with its huge rings. That made me feel very small. Very, very small. Like the ants. So now I'm in such a quandary.

I'm not going to talk to anyone about it. Everyone's busy with their day-to-day problems. They wouldn't react to it like I have. Why bring it up? I just don't know how come I never gave it much thought. To ponder: What is life? What is the universe ?

Oh, hell. I'm gonna go add some water to the spa and water the potted plants on the patio. That'll get my mind off of this. Better water the lemon tree too. Grab the hose, turn on the water.

What's that? Tickling my hand. An ANT, Now what do I do? Start a conversation or just keep on watering?



How Sweet It Was ...

I grew up in Scottsbluff, the largest town in western Nebraska in the 1940s. Population: 12,557. Surprisingly, in this Midwestern community, the most popular musical instrument in town was of African and/or South American origin: the marimba, a large instrument that looks like a xylophone, but it has a richer, more resonant tone than the similar instrument.

I was about seven or eight years old the first time I saw and heard a marimba played. I grabbed my Mom's arm and pleaded, "Mom, can I play that instead of the piano? It looks like so much fun to play and it sounds so beautiful. Please, Mom, can I?" Luckily, there were five girls in town who played the marimba quite well. So ... I began taking lessons from the oldest girl of the five players and learned the instrument's technique very quickly. I even learned to play with four mallets—two in each hand—for four-part harmony.

Soon I was performing at most community functions, churches, and school programs.

I played classical and popular music from Bach to Gershwin. Once I performed on a national radio show that was heard by the master teacher of the instrument. He offered me a scholarship to study with him at Northwestern University in Chicago. When he moved to Los Angeles, I came to UCLA to continue studying with him.

I performed professionally for many years and was soloist with the UCLA Concert Band on tour. It was wonderful to see how much people enjoyed hearing the instru-



- Rita Keeley Brown

ment and to see it being played. One time a lady even asked me if I would play it at her funeral because it had such a pleasant and relaxing tone – the atmosphere she wanted there.

My marimba playing became part of the Thanksgiving family ritual. When everyone—besides the turkey—was stuffed, all my brothers and my Dad would stretch out on the carpet under and around the marimba.

They'd say, "Rita, play us some music," which I always did while they took a short snooze.

And now, at my present age, the following poem tells today's story of my marimba play...

The Marimba

[in the style of Raymond Carver's, *The Car*]

The marimba stands in the outer room under a red blanket gathering dust.

The marimba's voice is mellow, resonant and soothing.

The marimba's sound brightens your outlook on life.

The marimba rhythms make you dance—you can't resist.

The marimba, exciting to play, mallets move in a blur or slow rolling harmony.

The marimba tone blends with all other instruments.

The marimba can sing out Bach, Bernstein, or Carlos Joabim.

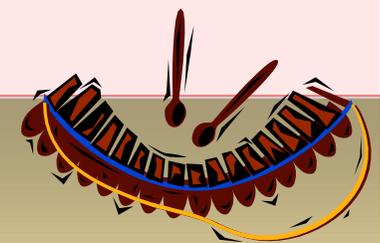
The marimba's rosewood is keyed to life by yarn-covered rubber balls on bamboo sticks.

The marimba underscores TV travel tours across the Serengeti to the pampas.

Does the marimba miss me as much as I miss playing it?

The marimba gave me decades of enjoyment, challenge, and a bit of acclaim.

The marimba stands in the outer room under a red blanket gathering dust.



- Rita Keeley Brown

Two of a Kind



Pink cheeks, raspberry lips
my granddaughter's favorite pose—
hand on hips,
You minx!

When I picture you, you wear a hat
like the white fur tam I sent at Christmas
or the one with the yellow sunflowers on it
you wore to the airport earlier this summer.
When you spotted me,
you shot across the crowded floor,
threw your arms hard around me,
knocking both our hats askew.

I adore you in the red sunbonnet
you sported on a short trip into Wisconsin,
visiting Laura's first home,
Little House in the Big Woods.

Remember the bird on your saucy straw
as we stood on the bluff above Red Wing,

or the multicolored Jester's hat
warming your ears at Winter Carnival,
the cap with the wild, silk flowers you pa-
raded
at the Minnesota State Fair,
or the black witch's hat turning white
the year it snowed while *trick or treating?*

- Lenora Smalley

treat sweet hearts

By The Sea

Bare feet stroll along the water's edge
Pleasuring little waves kiss my ankles
Like a playful lover

Sea breezes tenderly caress my bare body
Sun rays deepen the color on hot burning skin
Like a playful lover

Suddenly a cloud burst... cooling the heat
Leaving me joyful ...fulfilled ...happy ...contented
Like a playful lover

Contentment Interrupted ... gone the joy
Broken sea shell stabs ... to hurt ... to pain

LIKE A PLAYFUL LOVER

- Leslie Kaplan

THE PULSE OF LIFE

As my heart beats

Leaves blow

Bees buzz

Hummingbirds flutter

Children play

Tears of joy and sadness flow

My heart continues

To beat

To the pulse of life

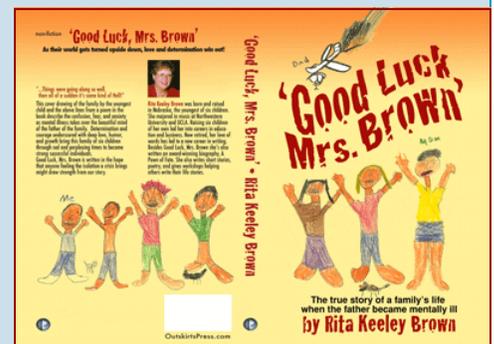


- Helen Katzman



Member **Rita Keeley Brown** has published her second book: **Good Luck, Mrs. Brown**. This autobiographical novel tells of a seldom understood or discussed side of mental illness: the impact on family. **Good Luck, Mrs. Brown** presents a unique retelling of a traumatic time. Although written primarily by Rita Brown, her adult children contributed their memories of life in the Brown household when their father was afflicted by mental illness.

This book will be available through Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Powells, Books a Million and nearly all the regular distribution sources. For more information go to: <http://ritakeeleybrown.com/>



Memoriam

In my dream I was called to read a poem out loud,
a weeks-ago poem put aside.

All I could see on the page, all I could read
were syllables, pretending sense.

I improvised the rest, a poem in memoriam.

I had written and written tiny tight letters and lines crowded
close,
one on one;
in closed airless container I had stored the fresh letters which
had become jumbled strings of half-rotted seeds
like unsprouted alfalfa, mung beans or dried whole peas
left in the fridge too long,
their wet skins uniformly loose
in even formation along each line,
and I couldn't read them ... so I improvised ...

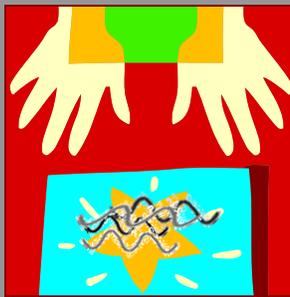
a long recitation of praise in remembrance ...
and the class applauded when I made a long pause—they thought
I was done—

and the teacher nodded, and said, "Very good."
I subsided,
But kept looking hard
down the page before me.

And in a tight small hand, written on crowded lines,
I could see the words.

I must return to my dream; I must
Find those lines; I must read them again,
Back to their poetry.

© **Sulamith Proctor**



The Placental Pulse

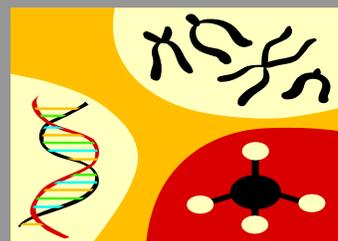
© by Sulamith S. Proctor

The placental pulse
surrounds, surrounds
a miracle cell.
In an unfathomable moment
it beats within,
feeds and forms
the outer shell.

A strong new pulse
now separately,
imperious will
to be free,

in birth, is born
with history
whose strands reach back
before the seed;
arrives to Now.
Mystery...to question...
How?

Into each new Now
again burst forth
electric will.
A thread reborn;
the same will,
still.

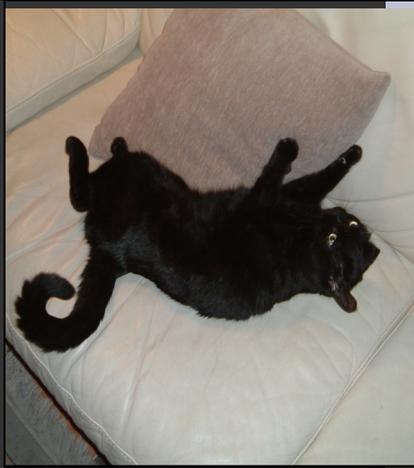


Sulamith was a longtime SFV/CWC member, an accomplished poet and writer of fiction and nonfiction. She passed away August 15, 2011.

Black Cat

A cat as black
 As blackest coal
 Is out upon
 His midnight stroll,
 His steps are soft,
 His walk is slow,
 His eyes are gold,
 They flash and glow.
 And so I run
 And so I duck,
 I do not need
 His black-cat luck.

Author Unknown



The cat is domestic only as far as suits its own ends.

~Saki

The problem with cats is that they get the exact same look on their face whether they see a moth or an axe-murderer.

~Paula Poundstone

KIT WIT



Cats are dangerous companions for writers because cat watching is a near-perfect method of writing avoidance.

~Dan Greenburg

Dogs have owners, cats have staff.

~Author Unknown

A house is never still
 in darkness to those
 who listen intently;
 there is a whispering
 in distant chambers,
 an unearthly hand
 presses the snib of
 the window, the latch
 rises. Ghosts were
 created when the first
 man awoke in the
 night. ~

J.M. Barrie



How like a queen comes forth the
 lonely Moon
 From the slow opening curtains of the
 clouds
 Walking in beauty to her midnight
 throne!

~George Croly



One need not be a chamber to be haunted;
 One need not be a house;
 The brain has corridors surpassing
 Material place.

~Emily Dickinson

There is something haunting in the light of the moon; it has all the dispassionateness of a disembodied soul, and something of its inconceivable mystery.

~Joseph Conrad

It Goes Without Saying

Her voice, when she used it, was a high-pitched screech. Some-

times the words only mouthed when no vocal chord vibration came along with the quickly exhaled air, sometimes an eerie high-low range sliding the scale.

The audience however was attentive. Parents, sister, grandparents, family of friends and congregation members sat in Silver Spring's Temple Emanuel early Saturday morning. Sunlight filtered through the stained glass windows and flickered over the Tree of Life Sculpture housing the Torah.

In this atmosphere of warmth she continued, the tallis recently presented by her grandparents draped over her shoulders like a living entity. She completed the reading of the Torah portion with her ghost of voice. Looking up every now and then when her words faded, she maintained eye contact with the congregation.

When her Bat Mitzva ceremony was finally finished she looked up again, took a deep breath and started her speech.

"Having been vocally impaired for almost a year," she began, "I feel that it is particularly appropriate for me to express my feelings about those whose voices have so often NOT been heard in our society. Since this is the time of year when we celebrate Dr. Martin Luther King's birthday and achievements, I am aware of the position of minorities, AIDS stricken and elderly in our society whose voices have been ignored so often. I know how it feels to have people walk away before I have finished a sentence. I know how it feels to be strangled before any words come out! I know how it feels to scream and not utter a sound. We must all listen to those less fortunate and try to help."

The short speech took her a long time to deliver. She spoke from true experience. A simple case of laryngitis months before grew worse and did not respond to treatment. Her voice became weaker and



- Lillian Rodich

more unpredictable. She tried to adjust, but was overwhelmed by fear and frustration. On the morning of her Bat Mitzvah she got through the ceremony and finally a dinner and party with much difficulty. Then her voice failed her altogether and tears filled her eyes and spilled into sobs.

One morning the following June I was awakened by a phone call. "Hi, grandma!" said a sweet familiar voice. "This is Lexi."

"Courtne," I said irritably, "Don't kid Grandma like that and pretend to be your sister. It isn't funny!" "Grandma, this IS Alexis! Don't you know my voice?"

"Is that really, really you?" I cried.

Then I started to weep... not just tears but wrenching sobs. Was joy supposed to be so painful? A miracle had occurred. The how I would learn much later. The fact alone overwhelmed me with joy.

Our granddaughter had lost and found her voice and in the process gained great strength and insight.

After the phone call I sat quietly on the edge of my bed. My thoughts were jumbled: relief, gratitude and great pride in our Alexis ... a voice for the future!

Alexis Is Twelve

the slate of a winter sky
and dawn's green sea
swirl in her eyes
reflecting innocence
intelligence
honesty
and a glint of curiosity
her brow is high and smooth
framed by the glow
of tawny hair
she is lean of body
generous of spirit
graceful animated
living the poetry of life
her words are her heart
and speak
with the voice of a woman

- Lillian Rodich



Crumbs of Contention



(story continued from
September issue ...)

Kenny opened the car trunk. A garlicky smell wafted through the cool morning air.

"What's in the bags, Kenny?"

"Stale bread crumbs from the restaurant. I thought we'd feed them to the ducks in the pond this morning."

"Good idea. Let's go."

Hand in hand, they strolled along the path leading to Iverson City Park's pond.

"So ... you decided to skip your Weight Winners meeting today?" he asked.

"I sort of ... resigned ... last week."

"Resigned? How come?"

"Wanda, our group leader, kept telling us that we were winners—yada, yada. And I sort of lost it. Started crying. She asked me why: 'After all, you've lost lots of weight. What's your problem?' I didn't want to talk about my problem and she didn't like that.

We're s'posed to spill our guts in those meetings."

"And? What happened?"

The ducks spotted the couple approaching with bags of potential duck goodies and grouped along the shore, jockeying for position.

"So ... I shared my problem."

They paused at the pond's edge, opened the bags and started throwing crumbs to the now noisy mob of ducks.

"Then what happened?"

"Wanda said my possibly unsolvable problem

wasn't going to be HER problem. Or the group's problem. Wanda likes problems she can quickly solve with a diet plan and a pep talk. So I left."

"Can I ask? What's your problem, Robbie?" He tossed a handful of crumbs toward a mother duck trailed by several half-grown goslings.

"You. Me. Us. How am I going to stay skinny if my guy and his family own a bakery and a pizzeria?" Roberta's eyes began to glisten.

"Geez, I don't wanna feel like part of a PROBLEM, sweetie. I ... uh ... LOVE you for yourself, and your weight isn't important. I'm Italian. All the women in my family are queen-sized. More *amore*, we always say."

Roberta threw crusts to a dull brown duck.

"I can't get fat again, Kenny. I'll get diabetes like my sister. Yes, I will! Fat people aren't healthy people! But I ... love you too. We gotta figure this out!"

He stared at the milling ducks and then said, "I get it. If you stick with me, you'll be messing with your health. Wow, that's heavy news, 'scuse the pun."

Roberta gave him a wan smile and sat down on a bench.

"Got any solutions, my dear Problem-o?"

"Well, maybe. Listen to this plan. It's been my secret, no one knows, not even my family."

"Tell me. I can keep a secret."

Kenny pitched a big crumb toward a multi-colored mallard ten feet away from the other ducks.

"For a long time I've wanted to open an Italian soup and salad restaurant. With low calorie gelato. But I need a partner to help me run the place. If I start this business, will you be my partner?"

"Definitely, honey. I'll be your partner in any way, shape or form. I'll even stir the low-salt minestrone soup!" She laughed and reached up for his hand.

Kenny pulled her up to stand beside him. And then the new partners threw the remaining crumbs in their bags to the noisy flock.

Six months later, their wedding guests threw rice with the same abandon.

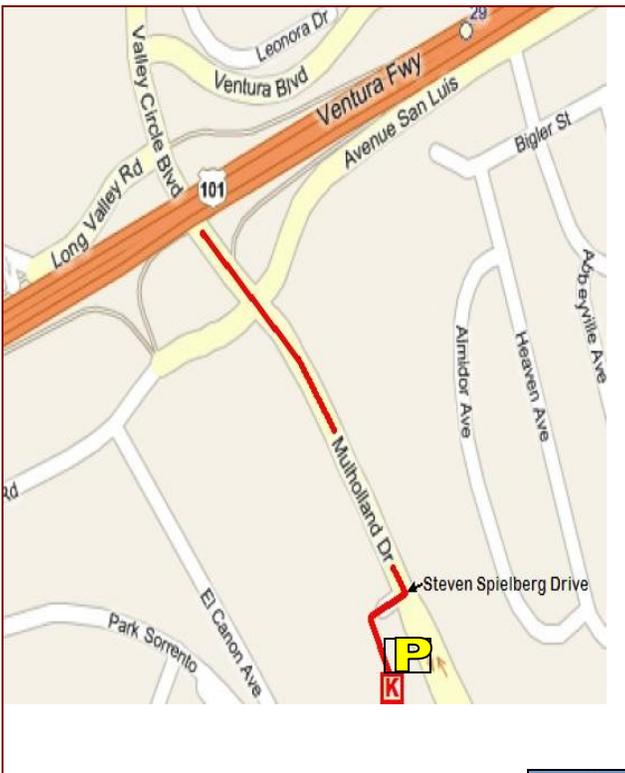
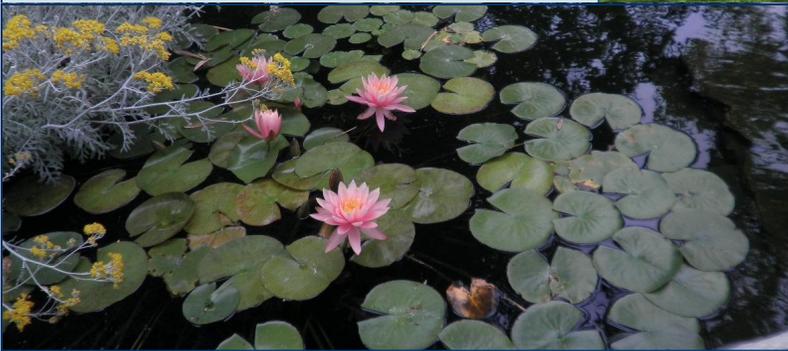
- Kathy Highcove



*Please
join
us
in the*



Katzenberg Room



MEETINGS

The California Writers Club meets the first Saturday of the month except July and August at the Motion Picture and Television Fund complex:

Villa Katzenberg

23388 Mulholland

Woodland Hills, CA 91364-2733

NEXT MEETING

Saturday, Oct. 1, 2011 at 1:00 p.m.

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Parking is available in a nearby lot, behind the Katzenberg Room. Look for the trombone statue - that's our parking lot, and it's free, folks.

